

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 AMMAN 01547 171558Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 970
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

S E C R E T AMMAN 1547

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, JO, SY, US, XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI - SYRIA

1. WHEN I SAY RIFAI MARCH 16 HE MENTIONED THAT SYRIAN DEP
PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM HAD JUST LEFT.
KHADDAM IS HERE WITH PRIME MINISTER KHULAIFAWI AS PART OF A
REGULAR SERIES OF JORDANIAN-SYRIAN MEETINGS. RIFAI SAYS HE
REMAINS CLOSE KHADDAM AND THE TWO SEE EACH OTHER OFTER.

2. RIFAI REPORTED THAT KHADDAM DID NOT SEEM TO UNDERSTAND
PRESIDENT'S MARCH 9 PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENT WHICH
RIFAI SAYS ENDORSES NEED FOR ISRAELI RETURN TO 1967 BORDERS
WITH ONLY MINOR RECTIFICATIONS. RIFAI BELIEVES THTHE STATEMENT
IS IMPORTANT AND POSITIVE AND SAID HE EXPLAINED IT TO KHADDAM
IN THAT SENSE AND BELIEVES HE MADE SOME HEADWAY.

3. RIFAI TOLD ME THAT KHADDAM HAD BEEN INVITED TO WASHINGTON
APRIL 20 AND 21 AND WAS EXPECTING TO SEE PRESIDENT CARTER.
KHADDAM HAD BEEN CONSIDERING NOT GOING IN LIGHT OF HIS
INTERPRETATION OF WHAT THE PRESIDETN HAS SAID. RIFAI
TOLD KHADDAM HE WOULD BE MAKING A SERIOUS MISTAKE IN NOT GOING.
THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD TAKEN SOME IMPORTANT FORWARD STEPS.
EVEN IF IT HAD NOT TAKEN THOSE STEPS IT WAS IMPORTANT TO

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BEGIN A DIALOGUE. IF KHADDAM DOUBTED OR WAS CONFUSED ABOUT
WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAD REALLY SAID, RIFAI RECOMMENDED THAT HE
LOOK AT THE HOWLS COMING FROM THE ISRAELIS AND RE-EVALUATE HIS
JUDGEMENTS ON THAT BASIS. RIFAI SAID HE ALSO BELIEVED HE HAD
MADE AN IMPRESSION ON KHADDAM ON THIS POINT.

4. RIFAI ADDED THAT KHADDAM STILL SUFFERS FROM PAIN AND

DISCOMFORT IN HIS ARM AND SHOULDER AS A RESULT OF BULLET WOUNDS RECEIVED IN AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT LAST YEAR. HE WAS THINKING, IF HE WENT TO WASHINGTON, OF ASKING THROUGH AMBASSADOR KABBANI IN WASHINGTON FOR ASSISTANCE IN GETTING THIS PROBLEM LOOKED AT BY COMPETANT US MEDICAL SPECIALISTS. RIFAI SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE IN OUR INTEREST TO DO SO. I THANKED RIFAI FOR HIS REPORT AND SAID I WOULD PASS ON HIS IDEAS TO WASHINGTON.

5. THE ABOVE IS OFFERED FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH. I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT AN INTENDED KHADDAM VISIT AND DID NOT CONFIRM OR DENY THIS POINT TO RIFAI. GRATEFUL FOR ANY THOUGHTS OR COMMENTS DAMASCUS MIGHT HAVE.
PICKERING

SECRET

NNN

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